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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the idea of excellence in education and provides some suggestions of how excellence can be achieved in a vocational education program. The first part of the booklet describes the components of excellence in vocational education, such as excellent teachers; meeting the needs of students, the community, and employers; and being responsive to change. Sections of the paper propose methods of building excellence in vocational education programs by developing and maintaining advisory committees; developing faculty, administrators, and peers; developing information and curriculum; and implementing the plan. The final section focuses on communicating success (public relations). (KC)

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Revising the Curriculum

POSITIVE APPROACHES TOWARD PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

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by
Michael M. Homer, Ed.D.

Dean, School of Business & Industry
Utah Technical College
Salt Lake City, Utah
and
Past President, Utah Vocational Association

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Foreword

The principal reason why most people are interested in determining and understanding the nature of excellence is to do something about it. The American Vocational Association is among the national organizations having a sincere interest in such matters. This monograph is an example of such interest.

Discussions of excellence are rarely separated from what has become known as the excellence movement, a phenomenon which should be described as part of the unfolding story of the recurring tensions among the groups which constitute American society.

The recurring tensions have interesting and useful antecedents. They can be traced to the cradle of democracy as seen in the conflicts between Athens and Sparta. They appeared vividly during the period of Enlightenment in the middle of the 18th century, and they continued into the latter part of the century when they were central to the work of Madison and Hamilton (e.g. the Federalist Papers) and also that of Jefferson (e.g. the Bill of Rights) as the three of them argued the case for a stable American government. These tensions reappeared in the middle of the 19th century in the debates between Lincoln and Douglas, tensions which led to war and in parallel debates about the focus of American education which led to a rejection of elitism on a grand scale by a costly but imaginative process of creating an entirely new system of institutions called Land Grant Universities. It should be no surprise that these same tensions reappeared in the middle of the 20th century as a part of the Civil Rights movement and toward the end of the century as education's excellence movement.

The tension arises from the conflict in views of two groups which are difficult to label. The problem of labeling derives from the fact that labels are rarely very descriptive and, also, that much of what passes for discussions of educational excellence are really discussions of ideology, political loyalty, various manifestations of elitism, and routes to equality of opportunity. For convenience as well as descriptiveness, the two main adversaries in the tension and debate involving the excellence movement shall here be referred to as (1) centralists and (2) decentralists. Jefferson and Madison would have clearly understood and accepted such labels.

Centralists regard excellence as something to be legislated or mandated by rule from the top down, while decentralists regard it as something requiring leadership and initiative from the bottom up. Centralists see prescribed and proscribed curricula, as well as subject choice, as a central feature of excellence while decentralists see instruction, individual diversity and interaction with the community as more important considerations affecting excellence. Centralists establish a clear line between thinkers and doers with thinkers much higher in their administrative and occupational hierarchy. Decentralists argue that no line should separate thinkers and doers engaged in education, and that both should be found in classrooms, shops and schools as opposed to being found only in government bureaus or administrative offices.

Centralists regard excellence as a quality for which one must search. Decentralists regard excellence as a condition which is reached by cultivation.

The tension continues, and the debate goes on. The only winners or losers among the debaters are those who have ideological, material or political vested interests. The ultimate winners or losers are students, communities, and the general public served. It is not possible to be totally indifferent to the tension and the debate. Yet it is possible to play the role of a detached observer or a bystander watching the parade and asking the question, "What is to be learned from this unfolding story of tension and controversy?"

There are at least four important lessons which have begun to emerge. First, educational excellence is clearly not an activity or a phenomenon existing on a single continuum or as a single dimension of the educational enterprise. It is not, for example, only a curriculum problem, an approach favored by many reformers who simply decide what subjects should be required of everyone and be, therefore, on the menu as the chosen intellectual food for everyone.

Second, the problem of fixing education or healing its ills may not be possible within a single system of universal education or in comprehensive schools. Schools, after all, are institutions created to reproduce and enhance society's norms or, more bluntly, to teach the magic of the tribe to the young. Yet the norms which are most administratively convenient in schools are often those which are most instructionally disabling to students. Academic tracking, the uniformity of class sizes, the propensity to test what is not easily testable, and the lack of connective tissue to link the community's academic structure to its occupational structure are all examples of disjunctures which appear to resist reconciliation. It is possible that the centralists have lost the debate with decentralists but have, nevertheless, dominated the scene and captured the prize.

Third, a significant share of the ills of education are related to what is happening outside of schools, and it is sensible, therefore, to look for some of the remedies outside of them. The problems of educational excellence may be symptoms of society in conflict with itself while attempting to recover from a permanent condition of crisis only to learn that it is not a recovery, only a transition. Certainly the performance of educational institutions is affected by the nation's fiscal and monetary dilemma, the diminishing rewards for work in the lower reaches of the occupational structure, and the crushing inadequacy of teachers' salaries. All of this sounds like an elaboration of an attitude of pessimism. Yet is is important to recall Oswald Spengler's admonition that optimism is often a form of cowardice, a failure to accept the lessons of reality and to deal with problems where they exist.

Finally, it should be noted that the second sweetest set of three words in the English language is "I don't know," a set which can rarely be found in the reports of commissions, committees and task forces addressing the problem of achieving excellence in American education. Again, this is a lesson which is as important as it is puzzling. Perhaps it is because most of the rhetoric has been generated from a centralist point of view. Maybe it derives from the fact that study groups have rarely involved representatives or organizations of vocational educators, teachers or those having extensive day-to-day experience with students. One shouldn't overlook the possibility that many political and educational leaders are often more anomalously opportunistic than principled. Consider, for example, the comfort with which many of them accept the principle of majority rule in South Africa and their difficulty of accepting the same principle in the United Nations. Or perhaps it is merely another manifestation of the low priority given by all levels of government to orderly research and inquiry into the field of education. It may be all of these, so the puzzle remains.

This monograph explores some features of vocational education which are related to the tensions which surround the journey leading toward the goal of excellence and particularly as these involve curriculum. While it endeavors to provide many answers, its most important contribution is, or should be, to prompt questions.

Gordon I. Swanson
Professor and Director
Graduate Studies
Department of Vocational and
Technical Education
University of Minnesota
St. Paul

Introduction

A challenge to excel is rising throughout America. The challenge is being met economically in business and industry by improving products and services. This economic challenge is backed by a growing demand from Americans for improvements in the quality of life, including clean air and water, and the preservation of our natural resources. But, at the same time, we want more -- more energy, more material goods, more of the good life.

Our workforce reflects the desire we have to improve our lifestyles. To maintain their standard of living, both spouses must often work to support their way of living. More and more women will continue to join the workforce. Single parent families are a decided trend, along with rapid growth rate in the number of minority children living in our urban areas. Two-thirds of our adult population have no children in school, which brings us to our ultimate challenge: Excellence in our schools.

America's Strength: Education

One of the reasons for America's greatness is the individual contributions of its citizens to society. We make that contribution because of our own self interest. We want America to be great. We want all of the freedom to enjoy the good life. But citizenship carries responsibility, and each of us must accept that responsibility by contributing our skills, talents, and energies.

Skills are learned. Talents are developed. Energy must be focused and productive. The good life, our economy, and America depends on our ability and willingness to effectively teach our youth and adults the skills and talents they need to keep our nation strong and free.

Individuals cannot fully enjoy the good life if they cannot read, write, communicate, or understand our world. Work is both the economic and the personal means to acquire the good life. We depend on our educational system to provide each American with the skills to assume responsible jobs.

During the early 1980's, America's educational system was criticized, analyzed, and diagnosed. We continue to define the problems and we continue to seek remedies. Meanwhile some actions by some educators and lay boards appear to confuse and confound the problem. Decisions to add more reading, writing, math, and science are robbing our remaining high school students of the

opportunities found in vocational education. Academics is a dominant part of the educational experience from kindergarten through tenth grade. Adding more of the same increases the drop-out rates of those students America can least afford to lose. As dropout rates increase, the more academically-inclined students remain to pass the standardized tests which, unfortunately, have become the benchmark by which we judge excellence in our schools.

The Teacher's Dilemma

In the midst of all this clamor for change is the role of the individual teacher. The teacher wants to improve the educational system. Ultimately, the teacher is assigned the task of improving the education of every American. Boards of education can mandate curriculum change; state offices and educational administrators can design curriculum plans, but it is the teacher who must deliver the curriculum in the classrooms of America.

A good curriculum is a set of experiences designed to help citizens read, write, calculate, obey laws, behave responsibly, maintain personal hygiene, drive an automobile, win at sports, engage in entertainment, and acquire the skills and ability to get a job and pay taxes. Learning these skills requires our schools to be staffed with good teachers, the necessary materials, equipment and facilities to achieve their goal. But all too often, teachers work under less-than-ideal conditions.

Many teachers are underpaid for their long hours of work as evidenced by an alarming increse in moonlighting. There is often not enough money to upgrade textbooks more than every five-to-ten years. Our schools and colleges are aging. Frequently there are insufficient or environmentally-inadequate facilities available for the teacher to do the job. They are expected to educate their students to meet the increasing demands of the high technology world of today and tomorrow. If school and college budgets cannot be stretched to pay teachers or provide adequate facilities, how can they find money to buy computer-related instructional equipment and provide the program development needed for our teachers to teach technological subjects? As a teacher you want to contribute and make a difference. But, if you can't make changes and become more productive, you, your students, and society will all suffer.

This guide will provide readers with some ideas to help make a difference. All of the methods presented here have been implemented and have resulted in improved curriculum, increased resources, and support by the community. The challenge to meet the changes in our economy and society demands educational excellence. Individual vocational teachers can develop systems for educational excellence. We can influence quality in America.

Components of Excellence

Vocational Education is Education

Academic and vocational education are treated as mutually exclusive entities in our schools. Academics has been marketed as "basic" education, while vocational programs have been viewed as only job or hobby training relegated to second class status. Those students not as academically astute are advised to enter vocational classes. Student vocational clubs are not given the same status as a pep club, language club, drill team, or debate team. Too often a student is told, "...and if you are having trouble in science, then you may have an easier time if you switch to a marketing class or auto mechanics, or home economics or a shop class or...."

How has this dichotomy evolved? Part of the reason lies with vocational educators. Every time we accept a "hard case" transfer into our class, we perpetuate the perceived difference. When we join only our own vocational organizations, or demand separate departments, or attend only vocational conferences, or dress to our perceived stereotype status, we perpetuate the myth that we are different.

Examine Yourself

Teaching is a profession. Are you proud to be a professional? Are you growing and developing in your field? What professional organizations do you belong to? Are you active in them? Do you read the journals, monographs, and research reports that keep you growing and developing in your profession? Do you contribute to any area of your professional organizations by:

- Writing journal articles
- Holding leadership positions
- Attending conferences
- Recruiting members
- Inviting academic colleagues to meetings
- Sharing insights with vocational and academic colleagues

When was the last time you met with a guidance counselor to provide information about your curriculum? Have you ever initiated a joint project with an academic teacher to develop a new combined curriculum? How do you teach reading, writing, math, and science? Can you improve the learning of these "basics" within your own curriculum? How can your academic colleagues assist you in reinforcing the "basics" for your students? You can provide new and relevant insights to your academic peers during such discussions.

Does your style of dress create a positive image? Certainly, a shop coat or other protective clothing is necessary while you are instructing. But at other times, clothes can create either a positive or negative image for you and others. At faculty and professional meetings, those business and industry people with which you work are as important to impress as your colleagues. Negative attitudes must be changed to build your image as a professional educator and for our profession as a whole.

Is your energy level high? Are you ready to make a difference, or are you just too tired? To grow professionally requires that you are also growing personally. Are you happy? Is life good? If not, why not? You are responsible for your happiness and attitude!

Change your life by:

- Starting and continuing an exercise program.
- Turning off the television set and doing something different. Go to a park, museum, or concert.
- Saying "I love you" to anyone who is important to you. If you haven't, say so. If you have, say it again!
- Reading for pleasure. Try a new book.
- Making some new friends.
- Getting a medical check-up. Do what you need to do to improve your physical health. Remember, you are the most important person in your world!

These changes may require you to set new priorities — starting with your life. Change starts with you. Only you can make a difference. To make that difference requires that you have the energy and time to do so.

To change and make a difference requires that you have support from your peers and administration. Obtaining that support requires that you first identify those objectives that are most important to you and your success as a teacher, and then that you make the necessary changes to help you achieve those objectives.

Vocational Education is Client-driven

More and more, American businesses are responding to customer complaints by introducing programs that improve quality and productivity. Quality and price equate to value, which is something every consumer appreciates. Without customers, a business cannot survive, let alone prosper. The importance of customer satisfaction is appearing in more and more mission/goal statements and corporate annual reports. New corporate slogans are reflecting this movement. "Quality is Job 1." (Ford) "We only want to be the Best." (Chrysler).

Vocational educators can also respond by increasing their productivity and improving the quality of their teaching. Businesses desiring to improve their quality and productivity see that it is less expensive to build products right the first time than to build defective products which customers will not accept.

Recently, I taught a workshop for supervisors in a medical implements manufacturing firm. The workshop was on Statistical Process Control. While discussing the importance of measuring variables, I asked the question: "Why do we want to measure variables?" After nearly thirty minutes had elapsed, one of the participants responded, "If the measure were out of tolerance, the unit would not function properly. That might induce an air bubble into the blood stream that could kill the patient."

This was the first time that any of the supervisors responsible for production of these medical supplies recognized the importance of the customer! It was a new idea for them to think that they were directly responsible for the future health of thousands of patients in hospitals and clinics across America. If the supervisors were not client-centered, then they couldn't expect the production workers they supervise to care about their work either.

As teachers, we have an even more awesome responsibility. We can provide a quality education for millions of American youth and adults, or we can provide less than the best. Either way, we affect the lives of millions of people and the future of America. Herbert J. Walberg[1] has called for a challenge to improve the quality and productivity of American schools. What an exciting opportunity for vocational educators! What group is better prepared to help American workers become customer oriented? A conscious attitude must be developed within our students. We can begin by developing a system of vocational education that practices quality, productivity, and value. To accomplish this effort requires that we identify our clients. Our direct clients are our students. Our indirect clients are business, government, and industry.

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[1]Walberg, Herbert J. "Improving the Productivity of America's Schools." Educational Leadership, A.S.C.D., Vol. 41, No. 8, 1984.

In deciding what constitutes quality education, we need to look at the list of indirect clients in order to determine the curriculum changes needed to build a quality vocational education program. To do this, we must define our market and develop ways of understanding what our market needs in terms of quality education.

Vocational Education is Market Sensitive

Vocational Education means we are providing education for work. What kind of work? What kind of occupations? Each of us is responsible for providing education in specific occupations for jobs that exist today, and, more important, for the jobs of tomorrow. Our list of indirect clients provides the key to our end product. Employers of our students expect skills that match their needs. If the skills are inappropriate, we have failed to provide the quality education for our direct clients — our students.

Vocational education must be market sensitive. We, of all educators, must be continually involved in a process that upgrades our curriculum to meet the needs of business and government. The massive growth in business expenditures for personnel training and development makes it apparent that the formal educational system is neither as client-centered or market sensitive as it needs to be. More than $40 billion a year is being spent by business and industry to train their employees. Many of our finest teachers are being offered high-paying jobs by businesses to join their corporate training departments. We can respond to market needs.

Vocational Education is Responsive to Change

America's businesses are applying *new* technologies at a rapid rate. There are vocational automotive programs which cannot or will not accept any automobiles newer than 1977 for instructional repair. *Why?* The newer models use technologies, such as micro-processors for which students are not trained. Some electronics programs still have required courses in vacuum tubes, or business courses which employ typing courses on manual or, at best, electric typewriters as the sole skill in word processing. It is difficult to believe that these vocational programs still exist. Yet, there are many vocational educators who have not been in a business establishment in many years, except as a customer.

Our professional journals relate that the exciting developments and successes in vocational education are with those programs that have responded to

the challenge of change. They are client-driven programs which not only have local business support but also heavy involvement by the business community in an ongoing process of changing and improving the curriculum.

This guide suggests a system which can transform your vocational programs into one of those successful, exciting vocational programs. The system starts with one teacher — you!

Building a System of Excellence

We have identified the key mover in building a system of excellence in vocational education, that is, the individual teacher. We have also identified the components of excellence:

- Vocational education is education
- Vocational education is client driven
- Vocational education is market sensitive
- Vocational education is responsive to change

These components provide a fundamental philosophy which is the foundation for a system of excellence. This system should be dynamic, constantly changing, adapting, and improving.

People who are growing and developing cannot help but strengthen and expand their values. Having values and behaving consistenly in accordance with those values is one of the major challenges of life. It means that our attitudes must be oriented toward change, growth and excellence. I believe it is wrong to perpetuate the notion that human beings are lazy, or resisting making choices because of a weak value system, Never! We are all in the process of growing, developing values and changing.

Most marketing classes teach how potential customers become purchasers. The process follows these steps:

1. Awareness. You have to know an item, service, or product, exists.
2. Interest. Knowing something exists does not mean it's for you. But if it is...

3. Investigation. You go out of your way to examine it.

4. Trial. Sit in it, taste or smell it, actually try it on for size.

5. Acquisition. You decide to buy it.

If you have read to this point, you are in the investigation stage. If you reach the trial stage, you are ready to test a process of changing to a dynamic system of curriculum development for excellence. These ideas build on what already exists. There are a number of components in the system. Let us examine each component in depth.

Developing Advisory Committees

Program advisory committees have been a fundamental part of vocational education for a long time. Advisory committees should be composed of the clients we serve. They require considerable effort to establish and maintain, but can be the prime mover for change, support, and increased resources for your vocational program.

Each advisory committee should have a well-balanced composition and include members of those client groups that articulate with and benefit from the products of your vocational program ... your students.

The following representation for a vocational program advisory committee is suggested:

- A current student in the program.
- Three to five industry representatives reflecting an industry cross-section. One industry representative should be an alumnus of the high school or college, preferably of the departmental program.*
- Professional Association/Union representative.*
- High school/District representative

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*Only industry or professional association/union members should be eligible for chairpersonship of the advisory committee.

- Two-year or four-year college professor.
- Department head or coordinator (preferably a faculty member).
- One faculty member invited (on a rotating basis) as a non-voting observer.
- Administrator invited (on a rotating basis) as a non-voting resource to the committee.

Note that the composition includes a comprehensive set of representatives from both the direct and indirect clients your program serves. A discussion of each representative listed will clarify why they should be included in the suggested membership.

A current student in the program. Your students reflect your curriculum as it is delivered today. As a student representative, one of them can serve as a resource for other committee members. By selecting one of your students, you are communicating to the committee and your students that you care about them and the quality of your program.

Three-to-five industry representatives reflecting an industry cross-section. One industry representative should be an alumnus of the high school or college, and preferably of the departmental program. These representatives are your employer clients. A cross-section should reflect the potential employer base for your students in the community which your program serves. There may be several businesses within an industry. Therefore, selecting three to five representatives from different businesses within the same industry does not meet the criterion of reflecting an industry cross-section. Furthermore, it is advisable to have large, medium and small employer representation. Careful consideration of industry representation may require that you conduct a survey of potential employers to establish a potential membership base. Such an employer base will require maintenance to keep the list current. Organize the list by industry grouping and size of firm, according to the number of employees. In this way, the list can be used not only for potential advisory committee membership, but also for a variety of promotional and communication activities.

Professional Assocation/Union representative. Depending upon the particular vocational program, there are a variety of vocational-specific professional associations. Examples include: The National Association of Accountants, The National Association of Credit Management, The American Association of Banking, The American Society of Interior Designers, The Associated General Contractors of America, "Local" Electrical Association, Sheet Metal Workers International Association, and The Association of Production and Inventory Control.

Most professional Associations/Unions have a program for gaining credentials. Unions have provided excellent apprenticeship programs which result in journeyman credentials for successful participants. In non-union vocational areas, professional associations have developed a curriculum and examination process for certification of successful members. It is important to include an articulation program for associations that have these programs. An articulation agreement can be maintained by including an association officer (usually the specific association's education committee chairperson) as a member of your advisory committee.

High school/District representative. If your program is located in a secondary institution, select an appropriate representative from your district. If your program is located in a post-secondary institution, select a representative from your major feeder high school. In the case of secondary programs, a district representative can open lines of communication between other committee members. Often, you will develop resource support as a result of active district membership. In the case of post-secondary programs, a high school teacher in your program area can be an effective communication link between your program and other feeder high schools. Besides the recruitment benefits, an articulation system will evolve as a result of this participation.

Two-year or four-year college professor. A secondary program should include a professor or instructor from the local college, vo-tech institute, or area vocational center. In the case of post-secondary programs, invite a four-year college or university professor in the program discipline to join the advisory committee. Several benefits are derived, including articulation development and maintenance. Accreditation problems can be better understood and addressed by a committee which has a broad base. Committee activity provides the opportunity for dialogue with the higher education representative which translates into improved relationships between your program, industry representatives, and higher education. The result can be a clearly defined educational career path for your students.

Department head or coordinator (preferably a faculty member). Depending on the organization of your program, you may be the only instructor. If so, this committee member is you! However, if there are several instructors in your program, then the program coordinator, head, or chairperson should represent the program on the advisory committee. This representative should be a faculty member, not a non-teaching administrator. The responsibilities of a program representative are to coordinate and follow-through with institutional administrators on advisory committe recommendations. While there may be a tendency for this representative to provide leadership for the committee, this person should not be elected as the committee chairperson. Only industry or professional association/union members should be committee chairpersons.

One faculty member invited (on a rotating basis) as a non-voting observer. If your program has more than one teacher, each of the program instructors should be invited to attend committee meetings at least once each year. When meetings do not have program faculty members attending, invite an academic teacher from your institution. The person is exposed to a dynamic interchange which encourages participation in your program's success. In addition, many faculty members gain insight into "real world" dynamics.

Administrator invited (on a rotating basis) as a non-voting resource to the committee. Frequently, questions about resources arise during committee activity. An administrator can answer questions about the availability and commitment of resources immediately. Most of the time, resources are already committed. If resources are not available, the committee members can work on alternative ways to provide program resources. I have seen committee members develop industry sources, or place considerable pressure on legislators or trustees resulting in the creation of resources where previously none existed.

Maintaining Advisory Committees

Most of us have had the experience of scheduling a meeting with no one attending, or, having an imbalance in committee attendance because educators dominate the meeting. Through proper organization, preparation, and timing, problems such as lack of attendance and participation can be minimized.

Organization. The selection of committee members is crucial. Your committee is a prestigious group. Membership invitation should be considered very exclusive. Potential members should be chosen by a panel following certain criteria:

- Establish a review panel. Initially, this may consist of faculty and administrators. Later, the committee members may include such an activity as part of their responsibilities.
- Ask for a vita or resume from the candidate. In addition to providing a basis for reviewing potential contributions, it can also be used as a future source of information.
- Develop a list of criteria for committee composition. Include C.E.O.s, managers, supervisors, and skill practitioners from business, and industry.
- Request evidence of commitment by the membership candidate, as well as his or her sponsoring firm or agency. Commitment increases the likelihood of participation.

- Appoint members for one year, renewable for up to three years. Participation beyond three years overworks valuable people, and reduces the opportunity to introduce new members.

- Establish a year-long schedule of meeting activities. Breakfast meetings often have the highest potential for full attendance. Starting the day with a meeting ensures good attendance.

- Always have an agenda. The agenda should be sent seven to ten days prior to the meeting. A phone call two to three days prior to the meeting to confirm intentions should also be made. Include previous meeting minutes with the agenda mailing. Doing so indicates you are organized and serious about the committee's work. The committee chairperson should develop the agenda.

- Always prepare a record of each meeting in the form of minutes. These minutes should be sent to each committee member prior to the subsequent meeting with sufficient time for review. At the next meeting, prior meeting minutes should be approved, or corrected and approved. The advisory committee meeting minutes provide the basis for future recommendations.

- The committee chairperson should be selected from industry representatives. An alternate, or vice chairperson from industry should conduct meetings when the chairperson is unable to attend. Don't allow committee activities to be dominated by educational members.

- Early in the school year, establish a list of activities the committee expects to accomplish. Include in your expectations a final report detailing the recommendations of the advisory committee. A minimum of five committee meetings are needed to accomplish the following activities:

    1. Review current curriculum and program evaluation information. Including prior year activities and actions taken on last year's recommendations.

    2. Identify current enrollment and employment trends. Examine the resources available for the program.

    3. Consider curriculum changes which will maintain the program at state-of-the-art levels within enrollment and employment demands and resource limitations.

4. Establish specific recommendations for curriculum, enrollment, placements, and resources for the future. A final report should be drafted and mailed to members for review prior to the final meeting.

5. Finalize final advisory committee report. Plan next year's calendar.

- Recognize outgoing committee members for their contributions. An award, such as a plaque, is good public relations. Both incoming and outgoing committee members should receive letters of appreciation.

Developing Faculty

Teachers have to answer three basic questions related to their responsibilities:

1. What will I teach?

2. How will I teach it?

3. How do I know if I taught it?

While these seem like simple questions, they involve a variety of complex considerations. Teachers need to stay current in their discipline. It is said that knowledge doubles every seven years. Improving teaching skills requires learning and demonstrating new behaviors. Teachers must accept the responsibility to evaluate what they have taught, so they can prove to themselves and others that they have been effective.

By honestly answering these three questions, teachers across America will grow and develop as professionals, and thereby contribute to excellence in our schools. They know that by continuing to learn, they achieve both personal and professional satisfaction and restore their personal energy. However, one of the weaknesses in our educational systems is that the burden of teacher development rests primarily with the teacher. Unlike business and industry which provide educational reimbursement plans for their employees, and are expanding their own in-service and re-education programs at dramatic rates, educational institutions have relatively few resources to support teacher development. One solution to this problem is for teachers to innovatively restructure their resources to provide the development necessary to achieve instructional excellence.

Innovation requires time. Therefore, the first component of faculty development requires an investment of time. Many school districts provide personal leave for orientations, career ladder, or preparation days which can be dedicated to professional development via workshops or seminars.

We sometime have difficulty recognizing that a friend or close-working colleague is an expert. Each of us has valuable insights and skills which can be shared. Instead of bringing in outside experts, a district or college could sponsor a number of mini-workshops with "resident experts" as facilitators. The benefits are two-fold. First, we recognize and respect our colleagues, and second, we save money by using our own resources.

If timeliness is a priority, a university is not the only source that can bring a teacher to the cutting edge. Vocational educators are famous for their cooperative education programs. Placing students in on-the-job learning environments with cooperating employers has been a successful component of learning for our students. Those same cooperating employers may provide a significant source of "cutting edge" learning for teachers. Many school districts and colleges provide sabbatical leaves. By restructuring the sabbatical leave process, institutions could provide teachers with several months of time to obtain invaluable state-of-the-art learning. A one-year sabbatical could be re-distributed into four quarterly mini-sabbaticals. If it is true that teaching is the second most stressful occupation, then the whole concept of sabbatical leave should be thought through. Teacher organizations might well be advised to increase their resource commitment regarding sabbatical leave.

During the past ten to fifteen years, researchers have discovered that there are many factors involved in successful adult growth and development. One of these is the presence of a significant other called a mentor. A teaching mentor is a senior teacher or administrator who has the wisdom to listen, empathize, share, and be a friend. Teaching can be a very lonely profession without someone to help you grow. If you are not a mentor, become one. If you need a mentor, seek one out. A mentoring system can play an important part in faculty development.

Personal and professional development activities should be planned, directed, and conducted by individual teachers or groups of teachers. Resources are best channeled by educational administrators directly to the grass roots...the teacher. Removing bureaucratic barriers will do more to improve teacher development than any other factor. Teachers who define the areas wherein they need to grow are those who most effectively implement change for excellence and increase productivity.

Developing Administrators

What is an administrator? An administrator is one who crouches over piles of paperwork worrying whether he or she can shift money from one budget category to another. Administrators are in charge of managing the allocated resources (labor, land, and capital) which provide an excellent education for students. This responsibility requires them to make resource decisions that result in a quality education for all students within their responsibility.

Teachers have been accused of thinking that their administrative official should have read their mind, or observed and solved a particular problem. When teachers do ask their administrator for assistance, they sometimes receive a negative response. An "us" versus "them" situation often exists between teachers and administrators. This is not conducive to a healthy school climate.

Educational administrators are not born, nor are they superhuman. Often the educational administrator was promoted from a faculty position. Once a teacher becomes an administrator, all previous teaching experience is not erased. It is important for teachers to remember that the educational administrator is also in the process of growing and developing.

An educational institution needs teamwork to achieve the mission of the school or college. A teacher's job would be significantly more difficult without janitors, secretaries, or administrators. Learning occurs in an environment not a vacuum. It takes many talented people working together to achieve an excellent learning environment.

Educational administrators must make decisions based upon the information they receive and understand. They seek reliable and valid information sources. Teachers can be a good source if the information is communicated effectively. Stopping the principal or dean in the hall and quickly spewing forth some tidbit of information negates holding that person responsible for a responsible follow-through.

Administrators and teachers both develop when they effectively communicate valid and reliable information to each other. Understanding comes by involving each other in the communication process. This teamwork approach requires significant amounts of personal energy. One activity which results in increased understanding is to serve as a resource to your advisory committee. Another is taking the time to share a success story instead of always problems. Administrators are positively disposed to anyone who promptly responds to their requests for information. Plan to invite them to specific

department meetings during the year. By planning ahead and sending a formal invitation early in the year, the administrator can place those meetings on the calendar. Just before each meeting date, send an agenda which includes how he or she will participate in the meeting. This will encourage attendance. By following this process, you will appear organized and thorough, which then contributes to your being viewed as a valid and reliable source of information. Invite your principal or dean to join you on one of your cooperative education visits to an employer. He or she will be readily convinced of the effort and value of the work experience. Involving your administrator will help both of you to develop, grow, and support each other in a teamwork atmosphere.

Developing Peers

You need more than the support of an advisory committee and administration to achieve excellence in your vocational program. Your fellow teachers are an integral part of the education team. All vocational education programs require entry-level skills. By developing an inventory of these entry skills, you can identify the disciplines involved. Once an entry skill inventory is developed, you can continue by developing a concurrent skill-building inventory. For example, if entry-level math skills are identified and higher-level math skills are learned as a concurrent part of the vocational skills building process, either you, a math teacher, or both of you as a team can devise methods to improve the entry-level and concurrent math skill development process for your students. These inventories are also an essential part of developing a competency-based educational program. This process directly improves the quality and productivity of student learning.

The process of improving quality and productivity assumes that the team members are all willing, eager, and competent to contribute to the process. Frequently, one or more team members will not, or cannot, carry his or her share of the load. The result may be a negative attitude toward a colleague which is often spread via the grapevine. Many a teacher's reputation and performance or both have been ruined because of a lack of understanding on the part of peers and administrators. Yet, as teachers we applaud students who try even though they make an error, because it provides an opportunity for a "teaching moment." An attitude that allows students but not adults to grow is in direct conflict with our basic value system. Such practice is not consistent with what we say we believe. Continued criticism of our colleagues is certain to build an atmosphere of dissension and unhappiness. Changing individual behavior patterns is not easy. Changing the behavior patterns of an entire organization is proportionately difficult. This change is necessary since the future of our society and way of life depends upon each of us making a quality contribution.

Building an inventory of faculty strengths is a way to begin a process of peer development. Each of us is an expert at something. By building an inventory of that expertise, each school and college can tap a vast storehouse of individual talent and skills, thereby developing an opportunity for the faculty to become excited about improving the quality of education and promoting a teamwork approach. Peer development is encouraged when each team member knows that he or she is making a contribution to a winning team. Everyone is motivated to join.

Faculty development starts with you. Pair up with another peer and start with a two-member team. Begin with a project that can be completed successfully and be a source of pride for your team and your school. That two-member team will grow to three or four for the next project.

Success builds upon success. Seek out faculty members who have listed specific skills, but have not volunteered for anything since joining the faculty. They are prime candidates to work on the next success project. Encourage commitment, then expect responsibility. Peer pressure is a powerful force that can be used to build or destroy. If you accept the responsibility of building a system of excellence, you must also include the responsibility of encouraging positive growth in your colleagues.

Developing Information

Changes in curriculum should be based on several sources of information. Your advisory committee is one place to start. But there are a number of other excellent sources for developing information, which include:

1. Advisory committee recommendation.
2. A review of the current literature, including journal articles, school/college catalogs, and state curriculum guides.
3. Local research reports.
4. Professional association certification requirements.
5. Skill inventories.
6. Faculty recommendations.
7. Articulation agreements.
8. Program evaluation reports.

A brief discussion of these information sources will illustrate how this system can be used to build a quality vocational curriculum:

1. Advisory committee recommendations should be used to point the way. Planning where your program should change is one of the principal responsibilities of your advisory committtee. The future course of your program should be identified in the advisory committee report.

2. A review of current literature is an ongoing process which keeps you up to date with the developments in your vocational area as well as advances in the teaching field. Professional membership affords us access to periodicals which contain the information so vital to understanding the advances made in our areas of expertise. Without this knowledge, our expertise and opportunity for development is limited. It is important to stay abreast of the information available. For example, by reviewing catalogs or curriculum materials of other school districts or states, we can compare their course offerings with those we offer, and upgrade as necessary.

3. Research reports are available from local universities, colleges, job services, tax foundations, or other schools. There are bureaus of economic research, productivity centers, or other organizations that conduct research at the state and local level. Other teachers may have conducted a study which provides new insights into developments at the local level. While it is important to be aware of national developments and trends, it is even more essential that you are aware of developments in the community which your program serves.

4. Professional association certification requirements clearly specify those skills which are needed for your students to become certified in a profession. Those certification requirements can be the basis of a skills inventory.

5. Skill inventories can be developed in a number of ways. One of the better known methods is the DACUM system, which is an acronym for Developing A CurriculUM.[2] Local practitioners are asked to identify the skills used in the performance of their jobs. For example, the originators of an architectural drafting program would invite companies to provide personnel who use traditional methods as well as computer-assisted techniques in drafting. Only those who are employed in drafting should be invited to participate. An exception may be to invite a limited number of drafting supervisors or engineers. A person should be employed who can

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[2]Embree, Rick, and Hart, John. DACUM Research and Development Services Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 1981.

assist the group in developing a comprehensive matrix of skills needed in the craft, as well a identifying the various skill levels. Educators should not participate in the process because of the need to eliminate any educational bias in developing the list of skills. In this way, you will have a set of currently-practiced skills to compare against your existing curriculum.

6. Faculty recommendations are needed to identify the "How to Teach" component of the system. Once the future of your program is planned, and you have developed a method of comparing the skills you intend to teach with the skills currently in practice, a process to revise the curriculum can be established. A team of faculty members can respond to your advisory committee recommendations by designing the course content which most effectively matches the changes needed to build a quality program.

7. Articulation agreements should be in writing. Articulation of curriculum is needed within an institution, among schools at the same level, and between high schools, area vocational centers, vocational technical institutes, two-year colleges, and four-year colleges. If we intend to provide students with quality education that is effective and efficient, we must agree to remove waste and duplication of effort in our programs. Articulation means that two elements are connected so that they work together. If you act on advisory recommendations, read supporting literature, and assemble and maintain current skill inventories, then a written agreement will define the sequence of events and connect them all together. Such agreements clarify the limitations of your curricular responsibility.

8. Program evaluation reports provide the answer to the question, "How do I know if I taught it?" Just as we evaluate our students, we need to evaluate the degree to which we accomplished our job. Student performance and satisfaction is important during and after the course. How satisfied are our students' employers with the skills we helped our students learn? How well are our students performing who have completed the program? If we are to achieve a valid and reliable knowledge base, then we must look beyond last year. By accumulating evaluation data, we can obtain information that will help us build a curriculum with "staying power."

The development of a base which has these eight sources of information can provide you with the tools and resources to build excellence into your vocational curriculum. Certainly, developing such a network will require a year or more to accomplish, even with considerable effort. But the effort will be well worth your commitment to excellence. Once the network is established, you will have the information to make the kind of curriculum decisions which will achieve a quality vocational program for your students.

Developing Curriculum

This is the point at which you bring together all of the elements that you have built into the process. You are committed to change. The advisory committee is staffed and functioning. Your colleagues have joined with you to form a team. Administration is involved and supportive. There is an information base which can be used to decide what you will teach. You have been involved with the development of all of these elements; your peers, administrators, and committee members have been involved with their respective responsibilities. You have a good perspective to use in developing your curriculum. Now you need to make a clear, concise statement of the purpose of your vocational program. Such a statement is frequently called a mission statement. This statement should be student-oriented. It should be stated in a dynamic way. Your program should continually be in the process of change and reflected as such in your mission statement.

Once the program mission statement is written, you can develop a plan which contains specific, attainable objectives arranged in a chronological order. Curriculum cannot be changed quickly. Your plan for change should be a sequence of achievable objectives which will allow your curriculum to grow and excel.

Each objective should include:

1. Topic or subject content
2. Skill(s) to be taught (outcomes)
3. Resources required
4. Implementation date
5. Evaluation method

Your decision will likely be constrained by available resources. For example, some of the new skills identified as not currently practiced may seem urgently needed, but the lack of existing resources will limit their implementation into the curriculum. Perhaps your administrator may be able to shift existing resources, or give you a realistic time line when the resources will be available. If that time line is unacceptable to your advisory committee members, perhaps they could obtain the needed resources from other sources, such as donations by an industrial group or business.

Other decisions will need the support and sponsorship of your colleagues. Some of the new skills require incorporating and building onto basic skills which will affect the curriculum in other disciplines. If you have helped your peers to grow and have involved them in building an excellent program, this support should be readily available.

Be sure to involve those people needed to implement change. Without their involvement, you will be presented with more barriers than you can overcome. Thus, as you develop your curriculum plan, have each objective considered and reviewed by your "team." Once it is developed and acceptable (achievable), and in writing, you will have a plan for a quality vocational program.

Implementing the Plan

In the proces of developing advisory committees, faculty, administration, peers, information sources, and a curriculum plan, many innovative teaching ideas will have emerged. Design your plan so that it is implemented in stages, over time, as resources become available. You and your team members will have to gain new skills prior to teaching them in your new curriculum. Therefore, you will need to develop a Strategic Plan which outlines the steps you'll take to implement your new curriculum.

The curriculum will have strengths and weaknesses relative to teaching strategies. If you or a colleague has a teaching weakness, you can plan to strengthen that weakness through inservice.

For example, if you are a building construction teacher who is unfamiliar with spreadsheets and computers and your new curriculum includes teaching spreadsheets using microcomputers, you might say you have a weakness. However, you do know a lot about Gantt charts and planning construction schedules. One of your colleagues on the faculty is a business teacher who is teaching an accounting class using I.B.M/P.C. micro-computers. In addition, one of your advisory committee members who is a building contractor, is using a microcomputer in her business to develop construction schedules and recommended teaching microcomputer spreadsheets. Set a date to learn the fundamentals of microcomputers and spreadsheet software from your own resident expert, the accounting teacher. Next, obtain a commitment from your advisory committee member to go to her business and learn how spreadsheets are used to reduce scheduling time and reduce construction delays. This process may require three to four months lead time before you can gain enough proficiency to implement the skill in your program. Additionally, you will need microcomputers and spreadsheet software for your students. The accounting teacher may be using the school's computers only half of the time; you may be able to use them the rest of the time. Depending on how quickly you become proficient, you could begin teaching microcomputer spreadsheets as early as six months

from now. However, if additional computers and software are needed, you will have to obtain administrative commitment. If new microcomputers and software will not be available for at least a year, then you can schedule a class for the next school year on using microcomputers to learn spreadsheets.

Your schedules can be developed and revised based on the resources required and the implementation dates which are part of your curriculum plan objectives. The success of your program depends, in part, on revising and refining your plans. Developing your plan by involving advisory committee members, administration, and peers shifts that plan from a preliminary, tentative state, to an active process of change and growth for the future. Excellence becomes a given, no longer just a dream. Your contribution begins, and you are proud to be a professional vocational teacher.

Communicating Success

The teaching profession needs to recapture the respect it once held in our society. There was a time when parents, upon receiving a note from their child's teacher asked: "What did you (the child) do?", rather than "What did the teacher do to you?" It is unfortunate when we hear a teacher say, "I am <u>just</u> a teacher."

There are two major incidents in my teaching career which I will never forget:

1. Several years ago, I entered my accounting class on the first day of the term. Five students from Iran stood and bowed as I walked to the front of the room. I was flustered, and could see the discomfort among the other class members. I asked the five students to please sit, and began the class. At the end of the hour, I approached the five students to ask why they had stood and bowed when I entered the class. They responded that, in their country, teachers were viewed as "fathers" and should always be shown respect.

2. At a conference in Boston, I was presenting a reesarch report. After my presentation, I allowed time for questions from the audience. I recognized an elderly gentleman who had raised his hand. He began, in very broken English by saying: "Herr Professor Doktor Homer . . . " I quickly interupted and said: "Please, just call me Mike." He responded with: "Oh no! That would be most inappropriate." As the session was breaking up, he approached me and told me that in his country, West Germany, teachers are given the respect they deserve, and that titles are their way of demonstrating that respect.

We have our own unique culture in America. And, while I am not suggesting that we should have our students bow or use impressive titles, I relate these stories because there is a point to be made. If we don't respect ourselves, and verbalize that respect, we cannot expect society to respect us.

If you have made the effort to excel, then society should know about your professional achievements. With all of the recent public criticism of education, we need more than a few champions to tell of the exciting advances being made in America's classrooms ... in your classroom.

Public Relations

You already have developed an impressive base for public relations. Your advisory committee members represent some of the finest leaders in your community. As you and your team respond to their recommendations, you have a series of stories which must be told. Community leaders have accepted responsibility to help the school excel, and your program is becoming an excellent one. Articulation agreements, as they are developed, should be publicized as improving the quality and productivity of the educational system. Your students should be spreading the word to other students and their parents. The realization of a move toward excellence can become infectious, and the word will spread, but not without some help.

If you have accepted the responsibility for change, you have also accepted the responsibility to communicate your success and change negative attitudes toward education and teachers. There are a number of methods to use to improve your public relations:

- Start with your students. Prepare announcements of each major curriculum change and addition or both. These announcements can be included in school or college newspapers, given to students to take home, or posted on campus bulletin boards.

- Send the announcements to your peers, and be sure to include members of the administration.

- Combine the announcements into a news story and send it to your community newspapers. Enlist the help of a student or writing teacher to make the announcement a newsworthy article.

- Send the news articles to your division or state association president(s) to be included in association newsletters.

- When you have a change in the membership of your advisory committee, give an award to the outgoing member, along with a letter of appreciation to his or her boss. The change in membership is a newsworthy item. Be sure to write a letter of appreciation to your new advisory committee member's superior for their organization's commitment to quality education.

- Write at least one journal article. After several curriculum changes, your unique experiences need to be shared with other professionals. You can help others in your field by communicating through your professional media.

Excellence is Contagious

Quality and productivity should be more than just words; they should be a way of life. A quality curriculum that increases the productivity of your students will be reflected by the students' performance on the job. Every teacher in America is a role model. We are mentors for our students and, hopefully, for a colleague. If we strive to excel, the teaching profession gains respect, and so does America.

Building a system of excellence begins with you as a teacher. We can no longer assume others are responsible for the plight of the American educational system. There are no easy or quick solutions. If you make a start and begin to succeed, others will want to share in that success. The system encourages involvement on the part of the clients your program serves, as well as colleagues and administrators. It also develops an information base for quality decision making.

Because the system is dynamic and constantly developing, perfection is not the goal. Perfection assumes an end. As our knowledge, society, and business practice changes, so too must our educational system. We must move forward to excel. The goal of the system is continued progress towards excellence through a productive, educational program that incorporates quality at all levels. The system is not new, nor is it easy to implement and follow. But, using the many resources available to us, we can meet the challenges that face us.